Arts Administration Toolkit

A toolkit for creative group leaders in Edenderry

Introduction

Arts administration is about creating the conditions for creativity to thrive. It's a blend of meticulous planning, clear communication, record keeping, and maintaining an understanding about the benefits of creative activity.

This toolkit serves as a checklist to artists and creative workshop leaders to plan, deliver and evaluate their projects and events.

1. Planning and Design

Successful arts projects require clear communication and foresight. Timelines should be generous, allowing for genuine engagement. Consider different channels for communicating your plans. Make sure you involve stakeholders early, keep funders informed, and it's always a good idea to conduct a site visit to understand a venue's potential.

- Communicate the times clearly and well in advance of the workshop or event.
- Do you need to share details in a Google calendar, on a social media page or website? Perhaps a larger event will require a press release or advert in the local press?
- Who needs to be involved in the planning process? Does a funder need to be informed? Do you have the necessary logos etc?
- Have you spoken to the venue? Do you need to visit in-person to check anything about the space?
- Have you set a clear agenda and shared this with the group?

2. Scheduling and Calendar Management

Your calendar is an important tool for planning. Whether you favour a physical diary or a shared online calendar, consistency is paramount. Keeping your calendar up-to-date can help with collaboration and prevent scheduling conflicts with colleagues and collaborators. And remember the importance of self-care: block out dedicated time for planning, reflection, and - crucially - rest. A realistic schedule, punctuated with well-deserved breaks, will help ensure that your creativity is sustainable.

- What is the reason for the meeting/event?
- What is the title, theme and agenda?
- What are your aims and objectives?
- Who needs to be there and who do you need to invite?
- When is a suitable time for everyone?
- Where is the best venue?
- Would meeting online be a possibility?
- Has the meeting purpose been communicated clearly?
- Have you advertised effectively?

Mindful Drawing - Edenderry. Photo credit: Mark Forde

3. Event Paperwork and Logistics

Every event or workshop, regardless of scale, requires a solid foundation of paperwork. This isn't bureaucracy for its own sake; it's about ensuring safety, capturing data, and providing a good experience for all participants.

Standard forms – risk assessments, attendance sheets, consent forms – are the building blocks of a well-organised event. Consider the attendee's journey: clear signage, informative literature, and designated information points create a welcoming and accessible environment.

- Risk Assessment / Event Form
- Attendance / Registration Form
- Photograph / Video permission form
- Evaluation or Feedback form
- Some literature or information about the event
- A possible agenda or programme
- An information or signposting table
- Signs to facilities or directing people to emergency exits
- Signage or a poster with information about the group

Festival in a Van - Edenderry. Photo credit: Mark Forde

4. Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a proactive approach to making sure everyone involved stays safe. It's a good idea to walk through the event in your mind, anticipating potential challenges, and documenting your findings. Whether you use a standard template or an organisation-specific form, add as much detail as you can.

- Any risks you've identified
- How severe those risks might be
- How likely those risks are
- How you'd avoid or reduce those risks

Please see this **guidance on risk assessment** from Creative Lives.

5. Attendance and Data Collection

Keeping an accurate attendance record will help ensure you have evidence about your community's engagement. Remember, this data is often crucial for reporting and, most importantly, for ensuring everyone's safety.

- Keep an attendance sheet for each event, for fire safety, and health and safety in general
- You can do this in a way that suits you best or a particular funder or organisation may have their own policies and procedures
- You could keep a sign-in sheet at the door or create a folder for storing this information and data - reporting figures to the organisation/funder you are working with
- An Excel spreadsheet might be beneficial or a Google folder where you can keep track of attendance

6. Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation is the cornerstone of continuous improvement. Ensure everyone has the opportunity to share their thoughts, both positive and constructive. This feedback, whether part of a formal report or shared in a debrief, will help inform future projects, demonstrate impact and will be essential in reporting to funders.

- Consider methods for evaluating and capturing feedback before your project or event
- Consider using different methods of evaluation alongside more traditional forms, e.g. video diaries, photographs, drawings, written and verbal case studies
- It is important that attendees are provided with an opportunity to give feedback in a way that suits their communication needs
- Ensure there are opportunities for participants to provide positive and negative feedback
- You may have an evaluator built into a project but quite often this will be your own responsibility

Music - Edenderry. Photo credit: Mark Forde

7. Data Management and Filing

Keeping a well-organised filing system will help ensure accurate records of data, receipts, and financial information, and help ensure adherence to data protection guidelines.

- Keep good notes and event records in a folder on an ongoing basis
- Keep all receipts for spending, in date order (for more see 'Budgeting and Receipt Management' below)
- Once a project or event has been completed, make sure that you file all the project information correctly - keeping any information that you may need to provide in future and following GDPR guidelines

Please see this **guidance on data protection** from Creative Lives:

8. Report Writing

A good report does more than just summarise your activity, it can bring your project to life (and, often, it can be a requirement from your funder). Use photographs, videos, and audio clips to illustrate your points, and weave in compelling case studies and testimonials. Craft a selection of impactful quotes that capture the voices of the participants.

- Create your own template for report writing or follow guidelines from a funder
- Try to convey the 'story' of the project or event - particularly for people who were not there
- Keep a folder of photographs, video and audio clips along the way, so you can access them easily
- If possible, gather testimonials and quotes from attendees

9. Budgeting and Receipt Management

Financial transparency is vitally important. Maintain meticulous records of all expenditures, using spreadsheets to track your budget. Communicate any deviations to funders or stakeholders promptly and clearly.

- Keep all receipts and records of expenditure, in date order
- Create a spreadsheet to keep track of your project budget
- If the spend changes, let the funder or organisation that you are working with know and explain why

10. Social Media Curation

Social media is a powerful tool for community engagement. Develop a consistent brand voice and try to share engaging visuals and updates. After an event, it can be helpful to share highlights on social media or create an audio-visual piece to capture the project's essence. Tag relevant partners and funders, and use social media as a living archive of your project's journey.

- Make sure you have appropriate permissions before you share images and videos on your social media pages
- Use social media to get messages quickly out to your community
- Create a 'voice' or tone for your group, project or event which is consistent - and make sure you tag relevant funders and project partners as this is a great way to keep them regularly informed
- Social media can also be a good way to support report writing or record the project's impact

See this **guidance on creating an online presence** from Creative Lives.

11. Funding Applications

Funding applications are often essential for the realisation of many arts projects. Make sure that you plan ahead so you have enough time to write it, gather data and testimonials, and create a template for standard information. Seek feedback from trusted colleagues and dedicate uninterrupted time to crafting compelling proposals.

- Plan well ahead of the funding application deadline
- Gather data, case studies, photographs, video, audio and evaluation information as you undertake your activities, so you have all the evidence needed for your funding application
- Have a template ready, filled with standard information about yourself, your organisation and the project - you can then copy and paste this onto each application form (depending on word count)
- Have supporting letters ready, and ask a critical friend to check over the form for you
- Clear your diary and afford enough time to do the application justice

Download Creative Lives' popular briefing, **How To Write a Successful Funding Application**.

12. Thinking Time

In the whirlwind of activity, make sure you carve out dedicated time for reflection and planning. This thinking time is essential both for creative renewal and strategic development.

- Build some time into your week for reflection and planning
- This could be a set time when you plan new projects, write down new ideas or work on funding applications
- It might be a good idea to go to the library, for a walk in the park, or a quiet space at home where you will have uninterrupted time to think!

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